PS 3503
.0845
I6
1905
Copy 1

INTO THE DEPTHS

A STORY OF PROTECTING SYMPATHY

BY

JAS. CLOYD BOWMAN



Class PS3503
Book .O845I6
1905
Copyright No.

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

INTO THE DEPTHS

(A Story of Protecting Sympathy)

Together With

Sixteen Miscellaneous Poems



By

JAS. CLOYD BOWMAN,

General Secretary Young Men's Christian Association Valparaiso University

[1905]

PS3503
.B845I6
1905

LIBRARY of CONGRESS
Two Copies Received
DEC 26 1905
Copyright Entry
Dec. 20. 1905
CLASS a XXc. No.
133907
COPY B.

COPYRIGHT 1905
BY
JAS. CLOYD BOWMAN



University Press,
Valparaiso, Ind.

TO HER, WHO HAS BEEN THE TEACHER OF MY CHILDHOOD, THE GUIDE OF MY YOUTH, AND THE COMPANION OF MY MANHOOD,— MY LOVING SISTER, THIS VOLUME OF VERSE IS CHEERFULLY DEDICATED

D.R. Mar. 13'30

CHARACTERS REPRESENTED

MR. MASON - - - - Town Resident

MRS. MASON - - - - - His Wife

MARY MASON - - - - Their Daughter

MR. AYR - - The Village Saloon Keeper

MRS. AYR - - - - - - - His Wife

JOHN AYR - - - - - - Their Son

INTO THE DEPTHS.

Sleep, my little one; sleep, my dear one;
Sleep, sleep, sleep!
The sun is slowly sinking in the boundless deep,
The evening star in sweet repose has just begun
to peep,
The eye of day grows heavy as the evening shadows
creep,
And silence loiters everywhere and lulls the world
to sleep;
Sleep, my little one; sleep, my dear one;
Sleep, sleep, sleep!

Sleep, my little one; sleep, my dear one;
Sleep, sleep, sleep!
The angels will with joy the nightly vigils keep;
With childhood's silken sails unfurled from out the
endless deep,
Will waft you to their sunny isles with balmy
buoyant sweep,
While mystic music mellows every murmur into
sleep;
Sleep, my little one; sleep, my dear one;
Sleep, sleep, sleep!

The father tried to hide his thoughtful care,
As thus the anxious mother o'er and o'er

Crooned to her first-born babe this tender strain;
For baby pain had plucked away repose:
But song, the Orpheus soother of the soul,
At length o'ercame the weary careworn brain,
And stilled it into soothing peaceful dreams.

The spring was on with all its heavenly bliss.
The birds, the winged angels of the earth,
With their return, had drawn another thread
Across the woof of years. The flowers unveiled
Their fairy faces to the coaxing sun,
And held congealed the season's melodies,
That man might easier catch them e'er they fled;
The forests shed their gladness everywhere,
Till all the world was focused in a smile.

The baby silenced from its fretful care,
The mother raised her voice in accents soft:

MOTHER.

Yes, this is spring,—within the cradle
And without the door. We should indeed be glad;
These beauteous cherubim of heavenly light
Would so enfold us that, though weak and blind,
No sin could evermore come near us, would
We but allow them. Look, my husband, here
Within this baby crib, this holy form,
This angel-molded house of clay, this face
That knows but sweetest innocence and peace:
We ought forevermore to keep it thus,
To guard it as a spotless lily-bell,

Against the frosts and parasites of sin.—
And look beyond the cradle, where the sun,
The bridegroom of the day, with sweetest smiles,
Now lingers down the darkening aisles of night.
He sheds his parting perfumes everywhere,
Until the world is all aflood with joy.
Ought we not thus, in love, prolong our spring
Of married happiness; that this, the joy
And sunshine of our home, may find no blight
In the environment we've formed for her?

FATHER.

We ought,—not only ought, but will, dear wife.—
But wait a minute.—Here, this pledge from me,
A token that our constant aim and joy
Will be in happiness for her, ourselves,
And God. Take this, a new-blown nosegay, plucked
With loving care,—these roses, snowy-white;
Take these, and wheresoe'er you see again
Their likeness, think of them and this my vow.

The twilight lengthened; and the maid of night,
The moon, through all the etherial vaulted sky,
Relit the million tapers of the night,
And everything was peace and quiet cheer.

Only a few more years,
Only a little while,
Our darling daughter that's wrapped in dreams,
Will be in all a sunlit smile;
She'll be the fairest lily-bell
That blooms in many a mile,

II

When the cradle bed has flown,
And the baby feet have grown,
And the little steps have lengthened on the floor,
When the darling form goes bounding
To the school bell's call resounding,—
Then the world of fear and doubt peeps through the door.

'Twas thus the mother sat and mused alone,—
The little girl's first day away at school.—
The sunny smile and laughter thus was hushed,
The noisome prattle stilled within the room,
The thousand little cares and joys were flown,
The playthings stowed away forevermore
In silent waiting for the vanished hand:
And mingled hopes and fears played hide and seek,
About the quietude within the room,
And raised forebodings in the mother's breast,
Throughout the long-drawn quiet restless day.

At length, the evening came, and with it came
The child, all radiant with sunny charms,
Bubbling with laughter, running o'er with joy
And elfish prattle. Soon the twilight fell
And silenced the wild wonder of the day,
And wrapped the wearied child in hushed repose,
But still the mother's mind was ill at ease;

A misty halo hid the evening star,
The star of peace and hope within her breast.

The fall had come in radiant rainbow gleams;
Had cast its hazy veil o'er all the land;
Its finger streaked the leaves with colored light,
And yet the fear of winter made them sigh
And shiver in the cooling autumn breeze.

They sat upon the porch, beneath the moon,
That shed its beams atween the parted clouds
That brushed its face. The wife at length began:

MOTHER.

My husband, I am sad and troubled much;
I fear our darling will go wrong. Our town
Is wicked, oh so wicked. How I wish
We lived far out in some fair wilderness
That Satan had not yet debased.

FATHER.

That wish
Fits only heaven; for heaven's the only place
That's banished him. But why be anxious, dear,
You'll feel at ease when 'tis morning and the cares
Today has brought have slipped away in sleep.

MOTHER.

I wish I would: and still, I somehow fear
I shall not cease this longing till the years
Have ripened this fair bud to womanhood;
For, oh, how many snares lie but in wait
To blight the life that now is lily-pure.

FATHER.

That's why you should not fear; with soul so pure
And form so noble, she could stem the throne
Of Satan with no fear of harm.

MOTHER.

With form
So fair,—I wish that she was homely
As she's fair. Her beauty is the very worst
Of all her enemies.

FATHER.

You'd have her
A mud fence, with brambles o'er it. But I'm glad
She's perfect as a sculptured angel.—
Were't not for you, I'd wish myself again
A boy, her age, that I might grow beside her
With but one thought,—to woo and win her.

MOTHER.

Yes,
Who knows but the saloon man's son is now,
This minute, thinking o'er himself, the thought
You thus have counterfeited, who can tell?

FATHER.

I know you're ill,—to think of him, that's
Being reared as is a captive condor,
In a cage, where he can never raise and soar
Among the mountain peaks of his high thought,
Or live aright the instincts of his soul;—
To think that he should dream of her, is weak

And foolish. Better contrast heaven and hell;
For they would sooner woo and wed than these.

MOTHER.

You cannot tell; for he is wondrous fair;
As fair almost as she; the nearest
To be found within the limits of the town;
Besides, the strange and monstrous oftimes happens:
Would it were as impossible as 'tis
Within your very thought.—Were I a man—

FATHER.

Were women men, they'd nevermore be angels;
But—

MOTHER.

Say what you will; were I a man,
I'd see the one saloon, one hive that swarms
With bees, that carry treasures in, and bear
Away the curse of hell upon their breath,—
I'd see it closed.

FATHER.

You'd furnish gossip then
For all the town.

MOTHER.

Be as it would, I'd do it.

FATHER.

It cannot harm us; furthermore, it needs
Must be,—it lightens taxes. And it's like

Another place of business; you go in,
It takes you not.

MOTHER.

If that were only true?—
It may, in time, rob us of all our joy.

FATHER.

No more! We'll neither be convinced. What use
Of being, now, thus drawn to useless quarrel?

The dark clouds thickened; and the moon blew oút
The million tapers of the sky, and bivouacked
On the billowy bosom of the night.
And so the mother, half in anger, half
In fear and mingled hope, was lost in dreams.

Who can tell what the years will bring?
Who can tell?
What will become of our darling girl,
Who can tell?
Nobody knows but the father above;
Yet, we trust that God is only love;
But what will become of our little dove,
Who can tell?

III

Out of the way of the world
With its buffet and babble and scorn;
Out of the way of the world,
Of its wearied and wasting and worn;
To the hearts that in unity share
Every mingled pleasure and care,
To the sympathy no-where-else lent,
To the only true, lasting content,
To the cheer and the joy and the love,
To the sunshine strewn bright from above,—
Out of the way of the world,
Though however wide we may roam,—
This alone is home.

FATHER.

Yes, this is home,—the far-famed oasis
Within the parching desert world: the best
And truest shelter for our lives of storm:
The compass and the comfort of our souls:
God's illustration of his heavenly love.
Yes, this is home; for concord cheers our hearth,
And, too, our toil has yielded plenteous fruits
That we shall never want. And God has filled
Our cup to overflowing, in our child.

MOTHER.

Yes, we at last are free from every care;
And comfort smiles upon our future path
All bright and radiant. Yes, my fears were foolish;
For she is as fair as any one

Could ask; as gentle, modest, and as good,
As could be dreamed of anywhere. Her tastes
Would fit her guardian angel's glad approval.
Truly, this is home.

FATHER.

List! there's her voice;
Let's in and hear her sing.—We'd have you sing
It o'er again, the song we love the best,
The song, of all, that is appropriate.

MARY.

What? "Home Sweet Home"?

MOTHER.

Yes, that's the one of all
We love to hear.

MARY.

Then 'tis of all, the one
I ought the most to sing. You are so good
To me, that I am ever pleased to do
Your bidding. But we all must sing together;
Then 'twill be of all the songs most
Beautiful, of all the most appropriate.

FATHER.

Come on, wife, this is comfort, this is home.

MOTHER.

Yes, really, it is, with naught to mar.
"'Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home!
Home, home, sweet, sweet home!
Be it ever so humble,—
There's no place like home!"

IV

It was the time when wild flowers blow,
When perfumes pure and rare
Were floating out on every air,
It was the time when lilies grow
With all about atune to them,
With every thought the purest gem,
With naught of discord or of woe.

It was a day when Nature caught
A million years within an hour,
When one beyond himself might tower
E'en to the Infinite in thought.—
It was a day in Nature's reign
That never could return again,
Save in remembered fancy wrought.

It was an hour when every clod
Seemed focused in one perfect thought,
When Nature all atune was caught
Into reflected beams of God:
When life was poesy and song;
When self was held aloof from wrong;
For Love, triumphant, walked abroad!

MARY.

What shall I do? What shall I do?—
It matters not.—When it is through,
'Twill break two hearts, whate'er I do.
Thus thinking silently, alone she went;—

The clover bowed its head as she passed by,
The roses drooped in meekness as she came,—
All nature stopped, entranced by her fair form,
As lightly, on the wings of morning air,
She softly tripped, the one flower wondrous fair
Of all the spring.

JOHN.

Come out to me, my love,
Come out, come out to me;
The world's a-May, do not delay,
But come, come out to me.
Life's in the spring, the birds awing,
And Love is king, and Love is king!
Oh come, come out to me.
My heart will break, unless you wake;
Unless you come, my soul is dumb,
Unless you come to me:
Come out!

'Twas thus the lover sat and mused alone,
Within the sheltering cover of the wood,
Sat thinking but of her that lingering came;—
That lingered long, half-wishing she had stayed.
And still she could not stay. Her heart was here,
Her home was there; her love was here, though no one
Knew.

JOHN.

She comes! my heart's aglow! oh, why
Does she thus linger, when my every hope

Is in her blushing smile? See, now she stops
And plucks a daisy from its nodding stem;—
But she is queen of every flower that blows.—
She comes again in artless grace.—O, love,
The minutes are long years when thus you linger.—
That's not a tear upon your cheek I see?—
You would be smiles did you but know this heart
Aright.—Do not thus pain me now, I die
To see your smile.

MARY.

Then, here's a smile for you.—
There, is your heart content?

JOHN.

Yes, love.

MARY.

Then I
Am glad I feigned it, though it pained me through.

JOHN.

Don't say it, love. "Feign" blights my hope.—
The sun
Is dark, the air is cold, the birds are hoarse,
For that one word.

MARY.

That word was not for you;
Could you but read my thoughts, then never maid
Were truer in her love than I.

JOHN.

Oh, now
The sun is bright, the air's surcharged with scent

Of clover meadows, and the birds are drunk
With honeyed song.—But why thus sad?

MARY.

Sad is
Nor word to use; say throbbing pain. I can
Not move or some dear heart will break.—
My parents, if they even dreamed that you
Were here, would rather I was dead, than have
Me cast one coldest glance your way.—And I
Were I to now go back to them, two hearts,
Two loving hearts would thus be crushed. What
can
I do? Think you I ought to smile when hearts
Are breaking for that smile; think you that I
Should weep, when hearts are drowning in the
tears?
Would that my face were double as I force it;
That this might smile for you, and that for them.

JOHN.

Yes, this is hard, I cannot see why they
Thus envy me, who never did them wrong;
For though I smile on you, the smile is pure.—
I know they say I'm reared upon blood-money.
'Tis not true! my mother is a Christian,
Meek as any saint. She's daily urged
That father sell his business, his saloon,
For her sake and her son's. She is a Christian,
Though she's shunned by all her kin. The curse
Is on us for his business; and on me

Thus doubly; for at times, an unquenched thirst
Has come,—I've seldom yielded though.—But since
I first beheld you, blushing fairer than a rose,
Since first you smiled on me your smile of love,
The thirst is quenched; and all I ever crave
Is just your angel presence near. For you
Are in my thought a million times a day,
Are everywhere, in everything I see.—
But why this trembling like a captured dove?

MARY.

Methinks I see some form there, moving near.
Is it my father, who perchance mistrusts?—
No, it is but a listless, grazing cow.—
But we must farther out into the forest,
Where no one's eye save God's alone can see;
And as He knows our hearts, He will rejoice,
Nor spread the gossip on the winged air.—
We go.—Pluck there for me that glowing bunch
Of buttercups.

JOHN.

They do not glow. Could you
But contrast them with your bright sunny smile,
You, too, would say that they are naught but common
Yellow.

MARY.

There, pluck that dainty Wind-Flower
Trembling e'en in this faint breeze, that waxen
Moon-beam, tucked away by night's forgetful hand.

JOHN.

'Tis fair; but you are fairer far than this;
You are the waxen smile of heaven, that angels
Breathed o'er your birth hour, and then in awe
Of beauty, durst not claim again; for fear
Of robbing earth and me of all that's fair.

MARY.

Waste not, thus wild and lavishly, on me
These love perfumes, distilled from your true heart.
I'm not more fair as woman than you as man.
Heaven tried extravagance in both to mold
Such beauty, and in unity it formed
Us each the other's counterpart. And now
Rejoices e'en to see us thus. And yet,
But beauty in the form is naught unless
It's mantled o'er a lovely heart. But we
Most happily, are both thus wrought and nerved.

JOHN.

You're quite extravagant to paint us thus;
But I am sure that we were wed in heaven
The selfsame hour in which we both were born.—
But this is paradise!

MARY.

Here, this Spring Beauty.

JOHN.

Yes,—It was named aright, 'tis beautiful;
'Tis even so: but you, my love, are Beauty;
And 'tis chaste, but you are Chastity.
Would they had named you sweet Angelica

Instead of Mary; still, that name profanes;
It should be simply "Angel," that's of all
The only name that fits you.

MARY.

Nay. Mary!
She was e'en the nearest Angel earth has seen.
The Lord searched waiting centuries before
He found, in all the world, the woman
He dared trust to rear His Son. Say Mary always;
'Tis the grandest name 'neath heaven. But John,
Methinks is common. John? But John was e'en
The one beloved Disciple. That were name
Enough to fit a king. But anyway,
A common name is most uncommon
In a man of worth.

JOHN.

But this is heaven to stand
Beneath your smile.

MARY.

Yes, but it cannot last;
My little hour is spent. Would it might spin
Its silent thread out into long, long years.—
How can I back into my home again,
And leave you now. Would we might ever here
Be fixed in an eternal spring of love
Fanned e'en, as now, by breezes of perpetual joy.—
I must not loiter or they may suspect
I'm long in gathering these few fading flowers.
And yet, how can I go. O cruel time,

How can you part us thus, 'tis but a half-spent
Minute since I wandered here. But I
Must go.

JOHN.

Stay! Not so soon. 'Twill be long years
Till night again throws its protecting mantle
O'er us.

MARY.

But you will come! Come quickly, night!

JOHN.

I hope this longing soon will cease. It pains
Me we must meet like murderous thieves within
The midnight darkness. Is there not some way
We may break the secret?

MARY.

Would there was;
But heaven is pleased to have us wait still longer.
Say not " good-bye ", say rather," welcome night ".
I go,—not singly, for you're ever near.

JOHN.

And I go doubly, too.

When will this waiting cease?
When the time be come?
For this fair angel to be my bride?
When we together can, side by side,
Fight out life's battles, whate'er betide?
When will the time be come?
Till then, my heart, be true as steel,

Till then let Love be e'en the seal
To bind our hearts for woe or weal,
E'en till the time shall come.

V

We weave in silence secretly
The fabric of our lives,
And no one knows what enters in,
What thought at last survives;
But when we feel the most secure
And safe in what is there,
Some force unwinds the mystic web,
And lays each woof thread bare.

As when the blind plant, groping wildly for light,
Finally bursts into bloom with the newness of day;
As when the young fledgeling first finds its lone voice,
And the instinct within it sheds wildly its lay;
As when the meek lily, with head drooping low,
Holds aloft in its chalice a spherule of dew
That the sun in its radiance resplendent shines through,
And illumes all its soul with a rare diamond hue:—
So Mary tripped homeward reborn from above,
With her whole soul aflame with the wild dream of love;
Unknowing the gods from their seats in the sky

Flung her every known grace as she lightly
tripped by,
Unknowing the arrows that pierced her hid breast,
Protruded their points in her eyes' wild unrest.—
Ah strange, we can read in the uncovered eye
The thoughts of the mind, howe'er hidden they lie;
Ah strange, we can peep through their half-open
portal,
See the image that's stamped on the spirit
immortal;
But we carry forever, and always reveal
Our souls in our eyes, though we would them
conceal.

MOTHER.

You're home again?

MARY.

Yes, Mother, I am home.

MOTHER.

I know not why, my daughter, but the hour
Seemed long and lonely.

MARY.

Oh, it seemed so short,
Scarce half as long as many minutes
I have passed.

MOTHER.

I do not understand you, daughter,
Hearts that love talk thus.

MARY.

Yes, and I love,—
I love the flowers; methinks that I could spend
Long years without a wasted minute thus
Among the lovely blossoms of the wood.
I would have stayed another hour, and yet
Another and another till 'twas night,
Were it not for your anxious thought of me.
I know not why you thus should be afraid.

MOTHER.

I fear there's other love than simply flowers;
The love of flowers comes only when we love
Some person, e'en—

MARY.

I love you, mother dear,
And father,—every one and everything.

MOTHER.

That's why I fear you have a hidden lover,
One now concealed, we know not of.

MARY.

But mother,
You have ever feared.—I know not why,
E'en when a little child, I heard you oft
Tell father, when you knew not that I heard,
That you oft feared for me. Why should you thus?

MOTHER.

You're ever in a dreamy lover's mood;
Listless you glide about; you leave your books;

Your music only adds its wings to these
Your dreams. I'm sure you dream of someone, somewhere,
That we do not know.

MARY.

I cannot lie;
I will not say I do not dream, and oft:
Pray, what unmarried woman is there neath
The sun that does not dream of someone dearer
Far to her than all things else?

MOTHER.

Then mother
Ought to know, to still this longing fear.

MARY.

Not yet; enough it is to tell you, he
Deserves the love I give him, but his name,
I cannot tell you that.

MOTHER.

Could you, my daughter,
Know the joy you'd bring, by telling me,
You'd do it now.

MARY.

No, mother, if you cannot
Trust what I have told you e'en this far,
That he deserves my love; then you would not
Believe or cease to fear, were I to tell
The fuller secret. But you do me wrong
To rob the only hidden chamber

I have ever tried to keep concealed from you.
But time will quite unfold its unknown depths,
Much as the spring unfolds the lily's bell.
But for the present, you will have to trust,
And thus believe that he deserves my love.

MOTHER.

I would believe it, were it not for one—

MARY.

Press me no farther; this is far enough.

As when the blast of autumn comes unseen,
And drifts the chilling storm, unheralded,
O'er perfumed bowers, and hushes the glad songs
Of all the birds, and wakes within each breast
The instinct for a far-off summer clime;
As when the lightning breaks, unseen, unheard,
And tears the clinging ivy from the oak,
And flings it helpless with a thousand wounds,
Its hopes all crushed, its towering beauty gone;
As when a mountain torrent rushes wild
Across the blushing plain, and in its might,
Uproots a helpless lily, drooping poised,
And drops it dripping in a far off dell:—
So troubles come, unseen, unheralded,
And from the inmost heart of hearts uproot
The delicate and hidden springs of joy.
So, Mary, all her being flushed with pain,
Blushing in anguish, passed into her room;
Alone within her chamber mused and wept.

MARY.

What will become of me? I could not tell
A lie, e'en pressed thus hard.—And now she knows;
At least within her mind; the secret's out!
Oh cruel hour that thus has robbed my life!
'Tis home no more: had mother only known, but
Guessed, the meaning of her awful words,
She would not thus have asked for all the world.
Kind angels, why did you not somehow tell her?—
Oh let me weep; for home is ended
Evermore; and yet how can it be? Must I
Break both the hearts that thus have reared my life?
I cannot do it. Who had ever thought,
Though true, I must be false in this dark hour.
I dare not tell my parents; they would hedge
About me such a wall, that e'en the sun
Could find no crevice for his faintest beam;
A nunnery were freedom side of this.
I cannot tell them, though the one I choose
Is worthy; for society uplifts
Its warning finger in a scornful "no":
A chasm's drawn between his home and mine
That I, with all my pleadings, cannot span.—
Still, he is mine!—But I am their's!—But not
For life! Oh let me drown my grief in tears.

Alone within her chamber thus she wrought
Her prayers and tears—there fought twixt home and love.

And listlessly, her fingers wove a wreath
Of wild flowers, nodding on their broken stems,
As from the silence of their hidden depths,
They smiled contentedly, though bruised and crushed.
And in her soul she thought she heard them say:
"Be patient! Be contented with your lot!
For faith and hope and love are never crushed.
The smile that's mantled o'er with briny tears
Is worth a world of gay frivolity
And lack of feeling. Sorrow melts the soul,
Burns out the worthless dross, refines the gold."
And in her innocence, she kissed the flowers,
As one by one she saw each upturned smile,
And answered to their silent brave appeal:
"God's good. I'll ever love and hope and trust."

VI

There are joys in all our sorrows;
There are thistles through our flowers;
There are vales between our mountains;
There are tests for all our powers:—
Happy he that meets his trials
With a steadfast trustful eye;
Happy he that through life's darkness
Sees some star transfixed on high.

The matchless morn in May had quickly passed:
And minute after minute slipped in silence
Into the great unfinished record

Of the past; as listlessly and all alone,
Our youthful lover roamed the quiet wood,
And poured his tale of love into the upturned
Violet's bell, and hid it there within
The forest's deepest depth where none would find,
And then passed on to hear it babbling ever
At his side. And then he flung it deep
Into the sturdy oak's staunch, fearless heart;
And as it rustled all its brawny being,
Enkindled with the wild enraptured song,
He felt relieved, and gayly passed, as one
Who neath a cloudless sky runs from his shadow.
Still in reverie, he wandered here and there,
Until the shadows of the twilight came
And woke him,—then he hastened breathless home.

MR. AYR.

John, where have you been lingering all the day?
You go about of late as though your only
Thought was on some day dream. But 'twill stop!
This is your birthday, is it not?

JOHN.

It is.

MR. AYR.

Then you're at last a man in age, though not
In motive. I've a plan. 'Tis for your future.
You must choose; you're at the parting paths.
In brief,—you now must settle down with me,
Take share in my saloon; or else get out,

Leave home and all you love! I'll have no more
Of this, your worthless dreaming!

JOHN.

Must I leave?
Leave home and mother?

MR. AYR.

No! I did not say it.

JOHN.

You same as said it; for of all things known,
I'll never work at such a business, Sir!

MR. AYR.

Then get you out! You have no share in me
And mine. Your mother's made a mealy-mouthed
And moral fool of you.

JOHN.

No use of this.
I would not work to ruin other lives,
E'en though it paid a thousand dollars daily.

MR. AYR.

Then get you out and soil these tender palms!
You'll get this girlish silliness soon cured.

JOHN.

Think you I cannot work? I've never asked
You for a cent in all the years. I've made
My money always; and could you but know
What makes me idle now, you would not blame.

MR. AYR.

Some sickly love affair again, that's it,—
I know you like a book!

JOHN.

Yet cannot read
Between the lines.—There's nothing you can share
With me; our natures are as opposite—

MR. AYR.

I'm mighty glad they are! But why these words?
I've had enough of your soft lily-fingers:
I'll to work. But mind for once and all,
You'll get you out, unless you do my bidding!—
But I will give you all the chance a boy
Can ask: I'll share the half of all I own
With you, if you'll accept.

JOHN.

Don't thus so tempt
Me; for I could not work as you have planned
E'en though you gave me all.

MR. AYR.

Then out! tonight's
The last you'll ever lounge upon a bed
Of mine! Your mother's stubborn silliness
Breeds this! Would you had senses that befit
A man! I'm gone; till I am back, decide.
And if you dare say "no", I'll say it, too:
You'll never put your form within this home
Again, or I'll make jelley of your surly
Mouth! You hear! Decide till I return.

JOHN.

He's gone,—I'm mighty glad he is. Would I
Were gone e'er he returns. I fear this strain
Will set him drinking more: returned, he'll have
A fit of frenzy, thinking thus he'll force
Me into being what I will not choose.
But he can't do it! Firm I'll be as steel!—
But mother, can she stand this sudden shock?
Maybe I ought to take his offer now
For her dear sake. But she'd not have it so:
She'd rather her dear heart would break; than this.—
And Mary; what, oh what of her? Tonight
May be our last. But 'twill not.—I'll not think.—
So I must go? I'll boldly go!—But where?
The world is all so large and cold;—I fear.—
But I can work; I've worked, and can again.
I can come back to mother oftentimes,
When he is gone.—But still, his threat is strong:
And he is blunted so by drink, he'd kill me.—
I'll have to leave the town and all I love;
But I had rather heed the call of right,
E'en though it bleeds my heart and makes my world
A wasting desert, than to choose the wrong
And live in luxury on beds of ease.—
O mother, is it you?

MRS. AYR.

Yes, it is I.
I've listened from my room to all you've said.

It pains me much to think that you must go:
But I'm rejoiced to know you are a man
That dares now choose the right.

JOHN.

You are so good;
You are the guardian angel of my life.—
But I must go!

MRS. AYR.

Yes, John, e'en now, before
He comes again. Let's to your room at once.

JOHN.

Stay; not so soon!—I cannot go tonight.

MRS. AYR.

You must for my sake; he will soon return
In raving wickedness to force his will.
He's been determined many years to make
You partner in his business when you came
Of age. He would have had it sooner,
But for me; our bargain was to let you choose.—
I've strengthened my desires by prayer; and he
Has tried to force his plans by wicked threats.
I prayed all night you'd stand the test today.
I know he will accuse me of foul play,
Say I have been untrue, have forced you thus;
But I'm prepared e'en for the worst, if you
But haste away.

JOHN.

I cannot go tonight.

MRS. AYR.

You must not be more tender hearted
Than your mother.

JOHN.

No, 'tis not that, but she—

MRS. AYR.

But who?

JOHN.

My love.

MRS. AYR.

Who is she,—but it matters not,
The world is full of "loves".

JOHN.

No, there's but one,
But one in all the world for me.—Say but
Tomorrow; any other time.

MRS. AYR.

But haste;
The train will soon be due.

JOHN.

But there's another
E're the day awakes.

MRS. AYR.

But you must go
On this, before he comes. Come to your room.—
I have these years kept faith in God and you.

Look, I have saved this thousand dollars
'Gainst this hour, if you but chose aright. Take this,
A birthday present, saved in secrecy
From out the years. Be frugal in the spending,
E'en as I've been in the gathering.

JOHN.

Mother, how can I live without your love?
In all my life, I have not seen its equal.
But I must go! My treasures one and all
Are stowed away;—ah no! they're in your hearts.
But I must go! must leave you both! But I
Will write you often, tell you my success!
Your welfare ever will be on my heart.
And if, perchance, he ever dies, then write;
And I will take you to my home and nurse
You in your age as tenderly as you
Have nursed my youth.—A kiss, a parting kiss.—
Wipe not the tear let fall upon your cheek
By me. Think as it dries, I'll nevermore
Forget your loving life of kindness.
I must go! The evening shades have darkened
Into night; and so my childhood happiness
To tears.

MRS. AYR.

May God be pleased to have us meet
Again; 'twill then be joyous as it's sad

Tonight.—Till then, "good-bye". And may the Lord
Be with us both!

JOHN.

Good-bye.

Who can measure a mother's love?
Who?
Nobody can but God above;
Nobody!
It's tried oft times
In petty rhymes;
But the ocean's too shallow to dare compare;
And the earth is too narrow e'en everywhere:
Who must measure a mother's love?
Who?
God!

VII

When the baby bird's flown from its nest in the elm,
And the sunshine peeps in on an empty abode,
And the mother bird chirps to her mate at her side
As together they dream by the long lonesome road;—
There is something too deep for a tear to express,
And a something too sacred for thought to explore,
There is something now gone that they sigh to caress
As they sink in the thought they shall nevermore bless,—
When the baby bird's flown from its nest in the elm.

When the baby bird's flown from its nest in the elm,
Has unknowingly broken its frail new-fledged wing,
And can nevermore raise from its far away flight
And return with the joy and the peace it would bring;—
It is then that in heaven our God heaves a sigh,
And all nature is sad and in tears moaneth low,
It is then that the mother bird wisheth to die,
To be folded, unknowing, forever to lie,—
When the baby bird's flown from its nest in the elm.

MOTHER.

Has't come to this? My God, has't come to this!
My husband, up!—My God, has't come to this!—
The morn shall nevermore awake the earth

As a sweet child from dreams. 'Twill evermore
Be but a parched-up desert. My God, my God!
Has't come to this! My husband! She has flown!
Is there no help! Can we not rescue her!

FATHER.

What, wife, why this wild dream?

MOTHER.

Is't but a dream?
A frenzied nightmare?—Then, my God be praised.—
But 'tis not! Read this tear-stained note she left
Within her chamber! Yes, 'tis true! She's flown!
Is there no help? Can we not rescue her?
Can we not telegraph?

FATHER.

What, is it true?
Ah, can it be?—We cannot rescue her.
I see it all,—they're married e'er the morn,
That pales his rosy cheek in tears to tell
Us this, could wake us.

MOTHER.

Oh! is't even so!
The last hope gone! It can't be; God is Love!
It cannot be!

FATHER.

It's very hard to bear.
We cannot understand our God of Love;
For sometimes He must lead us even through

The valley and the shadow e'er we ll see
Our sins. I see it now! Would I had seen
It many years ago. I voted many times
To keep that one saloon to lighten tax.
Where are my petty taxes now! And think,
I once had in my hand the power to crush it,
Had I but risen then and struck the blow.
I saw no harm in it to me or mine:
That was my sin, and God has punished justly;
For I denied I was my brother's keeper.—
Oh, what have I done?

MOTHER.

You've sold her soul!
Would I had only made you see what I
Saw in a vision many years ago.—
Mine's half the sin; for I, with all my might,
Could have persuaded you.—Has't come to this?

FATHER.

You are too fair and honest in these words,
For mortal woman; yes, we both must share
The burden equally; for doubly we
Can bear the millstone that would break each heart,
If borne alone.

MOTHER.

My God, I know not
If 'twill last. My heart is almost broken now.
My hopes are fled! Shall we not somehow try
To rescue her and bring her safely home?
Could we not bear her husband round our hearth,

If she'd return? Let's bid them welcome home;
Perchance, they'll come.

FATHER.

No, wife,—She'll come "alone",
If we but give her time. Do you not see
These tearstains here upon her parting note?
That drunkard's son that has beguiled her thus,
Will soon betray her; then she'll come alone.—
Too true, she'll bring a bleeding, broken heart,
And tears and taints of sin. 'Twill not be she,
The joyous angel, flitting fairy-like
Around, as once she did.—It can't be changed
By us; nor can we bear the viper that
Has thus so deadly bitten at our hearts.

MOTHER.

It would not be my way. But it may be
The best.—O time, come back to us again;
Come ravel out the stitches we have woven,
That we may now correct our sad mistakes,
And weave aright the fabric of our lives.—
Oh, would we had her back again!—Alas!
I know not but this broken heart must cease:
Its joy has fled; its hopes are vainly crushed!

FATHER.

Don't say it, wife. Bear up! You can for me!—
I know it's hard, almost beyond our wills.—
But look! the roses snowy-white still bloom!—
Here, take this nosegay, plucked with bleeding heart.
It is my vow that God and you and her,

Are all the chords this soul shall ever strike.—
We'll stand together, though our wounds are deep;
We'll stand together, though our backs do bend;
We'll stand together, though our hearts are crushed!

Standing together when joys overcome us,
Standing together when sorrows benumb us,
Standing together in sunshine and rain:
God is so good in his wonderful wisdom;
All that He gives us is infinite gain;
Sharing our joys they are evermore doubled,
Sharing our sorrows thus rends them in twain:
Loving is ever the law of our being:
Selfishness always our infinite pain.

VIII

In many a sorrow there's much of joy;
For many a wound there is healing balm;
Every shadow is skirted with sunshine serene;
Every tear mirrors back the glad warmth of some joy.
But apart, in the silence, uncheered and alone,
With the chill of a sadness, deep-seated in pain;
Dwell those who wait late for a vanished face,
Long lost in the distance of fleeting years:
Neglecting their ninety and nine waiting pleasures,
They grope in the depth of their one lengthening shadow,
Apart and alone in their sickening sorrow.

MOTHER.

Yes, husband, it is just a year today;
Oh such a long, long year, since John's old mother
mother
Died in sorrow. How it pains my heart
To think of her again. She was so good.
After her husband died, she ever waited
Patiently. Each day she slowly trudged
Down to the office for the long expected
Letter, ever saying, "It will come,
'Twill surely come today." And thus she ever
Said; and ever trudged along alone,—
Never, it seemed, lost faith that John would
write.

FATHER.

Yes, wife, I well remember the last time
She stopped to see if we had heard from them.
She told us o'er her parting scene with John;
How he had promised he would write each week;
About his tear let fall upon her cheek;—
She told it all again.—Her faith in John
Was ever strong. She always knew he'd write
If he but had the chance.—'Twas thus she died.

MOTHER.

And e'en the last she spoke was in a prayer,
A prayer for him, her darling boy.—She's dead;
And so we soon will be, unless our long
Lost girl returns. Our time is not far distant.—
Many a time and oft, we've prayed in tears,
Prayed daily she might come again to cheer

Us in our age, if haply she were living,
And something always tells us that she is.

FATHER.

We've heard it in the crowing of the cock,
That many times stands boldly on the step,
And seems to say, she's coming, coming soon.

And many a time the birds seem to forecast
Her quick return. And many a time in dreams
And nightmares we have seen her, always
It seems is coming, still is held away.

MOTHER.

And thus we've prayed and waited long, long years;
Until Time's frosts have gilded us with age,
Have brought the haggard look of longing pain,
Have brought the quivering step and broken voice
And withered form,—have brought almost despair.

FATHER.

And still we've prayed and waited evermore:—
As for a much expected midnight guest,
The match is always ready on the chair
Beside our bed, if haply we may hear
Her longed for rap upon the waiting door.—
And many a time we've had it in our minds
To advertise for her; but something
Ever tells us she will come, come soon, before
Our advertisement's even printed.

MOTHER.

And many a time we've had it in our minds
To give her up in deep despair and lay
Us down in anguish, lay us down in death.

FATHER.

But something ever tells us she will come.
Yes, think the signs we had but yesterday;
Signs that we think are never known to fail.
For everything I touched was sure to fall:
Her dish, the last that's left of all she had,
Slipped from my hand into a ruined heap.
All told that some one, e'en our darling girl,
Would come, would surely come, e'en yesterday.
And still, the day has slowly lingered past,
And still the night is gone in weary dreams,
Has brought naught but another waiting day.

FATHER.

But somehow, I believe she'll come "today:"
Signs should be good, methinks, at least two days.

MOTHER.

Ah, so we've thought e'en many, many days.
If all the signs failed yesterday, she will
Not come today.

FATHER.

The morning church bells ring.

MOTHER.

We'll lock the door; although we seldom do;
But since she did not come home yesterday,
She surely will not come today.

FATHER.

What if
Perchance she comes and finds it locked?—We go.

MOTHER.

Ah, we have waited all the years,—so long!
Our heads are drooped beneath their weight of care,
Our hearts are mellowed by the frosts of sorrow.—
Has God at last, you think, forsaken us?
We've prayed without cessation, prayed for years,
That we might see her darling face again,—
But once! Is God thus ever deaf and blind
To this, our earnest wish and heartfelt prayer?

FATHER.

Who knows but it is 'gainst His will? Who knows
But she is happier where she is, than we?—
Maybe her beauty and her purity
Have held him from his drunkenness, who knows?
I've always thought that hell itself would gape
A sober breath at sight of her. Who knows,
But they may own a happy home, and dwell
With children molded in her image,
Prattling ever in perpetual joy and mirth?

MOTHER.

It cannot be. Had she been ever happy,
We'd soon have known it. Wretchedness and sin
Is all that ever separates two souls

That once have loved. I have had many dreams
Of late. I've seemed to see a blot upon
The face of spring. A hideous monster
That scared the birds until they left our trees,
That even veiled the sunlight from our porch;—
It seemed 'twas ours.—If dreams are ever true,
She'll come!—And yet we've always thought she'd come,—
The first year was a century through waiting.
How slow the time has poked and lagged. Methinks
Eternities of bliss were not so long
As these expectant years.

FATHER.

You've long borne up,
My faithful wife. Be not thus sad. Cheer up!
Our years of tears are nearly past. Cheer up!
She'll come; and then one minute will repay
For all these waiting years. And then in peace,
With her returned, we well can live and die.
She'll nurse our age as we have nursed her youth.—
Cheer up! For see! the trees are all ajoy
With winged song!

MOTHER.

I'm glad we're here at last;
The walk has tired me much. We'll ask e'en strength

To last another weary waiting week.

(music within)

There is joy for every sorrow,
There is rest for every care,
There is hope for every longing,
There is sunshine everywhere;
For our God is good, He loves us,
And each burden, rolls away;
With sweet peace, the gift of heaven,
Cheers us ever on our way.

IX

As a wreck that is tossed on a rock-riven shore;—
With its timbers all shattered, its cordage all tore,
With the compass wrenched loose from its place at the bow,
With the pilot's eye closed in his death-stricken brow,
When the engine has breathed its last life-giving power,
And the captain lies dead at his post by the tower:—
So sin, with its storms and its sickening waves,
With its mutterings and groanings and dark-hidden caves,
Blows us far from our course, into desolate graves.

MARY.

Yes, I am coming, coming home at last,
Besmirched in sin, e'en to its farthest depths.

This faded bonnet and this worn-out gown
Comes trailing down the darkest alley
From the depot, fearing lest someone may now
Trace out these fearful faded features, know
'Tis I.—Comes back at last; alas, too late!—
See how the pigeons turn and fly away:
Ah, once they used to coo upon my shoulder.
See the children run in fear and hide;
They used to run to meet me with a smile,
And have my latest story. See! the birds
Hush their glad songs and scream in fear at me,
And fly away.—Yes, here I come again,
Come knocking on the scarce remembered door;
Come knocking as a tramp at this back door.—
I'm glad they are not here, the door is locked;
I almost wish that they were dead and gone.
But I will wait here on the porch a while,
And think it out again, the dream of youth.—
There in the old accustomed place, still stands
The rosary. There, with its pure white roses
Nodding in the breeze, shut off from all
The wide wild tumult of the wicked world,
In innocence and purity, it sheds
Its perfume, tinctured from the crystal dew.
Ah, beauteous rose, with pure and stainless hue,
Once I was pure and stainless, e'en as you;
Once I was fair and innocent, once wild
And free; once I was glad and happy,
Bubbling o'er with glee. My fingers used to train
You into wreathes for my fair sunny brow;

I used to wear you on my snowy bosom:
I will be a child again e'en now; will pluck
A bunch of blossoms, wreathe them with my
smiles,
And crown my wearied brow.
Then dreamily,

She sorted out the fairest of the fair,
Returned and sat upon the porch to weave
The wreathe.—She woke; the roses woke her
From her dream: a thorn was in her finger
And her flesh.—O'ercome with wicked imagery
Of sin; her hopes all vanished now, she pulled
The placid petals from their thorny stems
And flung them stained and bleeding on the
ground.

MARY.

Oh horrors! I can never stand this strain;
This awful strain; this sickening strain;
This mottled mockery.
And thus she swooned.

The wages of sin is death;
And the wages of pleasure, pain:
The normal life is the life of right,
That toils for others with matchless might;
Its wages is endless gain.

X

The spring was on again, with all its heavenly
bliss.
The birds, the winged angels of the earth,
With their return, had drawn another thread
Across the woof of years. The flowers unveiled
Their fairy faces to the coaxing sun,
And held congealed the season's melodies.
The world, in all, was e'en a focused smile,
In all, was just the same as it had been
So many many years before. But they,
So sad to think, were both so changed, that now,
They hardly knew the season of the year.—
Would it were winter!—But they came at last;
Locked-arms, came up the old front steps,
Stopped just a minute in the waiting room
To pray again that she might come, their long
Departed, darling, angel girl. The mother stepped
Into the kitchen, with her thoughts perplexed;
The porch door opened hard, as though it pitied
Her, and dreaded e'en this fearful shock,—
She saw.—Stood there transfixed as marble
As she raised the sunken eye, retouched
The lips with ruby, brushed away the furrows
From the forehead, plumped the wasted cheeks,
Replaced their roses and their smiles, recaught
Again the tangled sunbeams in the faded
Hair.—Then fully recognized, and shrieked.

MOTHER.

Is't come to this! I did not see.—'Twas but
A monstrous dream!—It cannot be! This! this!!
This once most perfect form! this golden hair!—
It cannot be!—Why did I live thus long?
Is this the prayer I prayed?—not this!—my prayer?
My God, I did not pray! I never prayed
For this!

FATHER.

What now? Is this a frenzied fit?—
I do not see aright! 'Tis but the blot
You saw within your dream!—Are these the curls
Of that once sun-lit brow? Now faded thus?
Is this the forehead that once graced your breast?
Now stained with sin? Are these the lips? now parched?
That once were rubies red? And these the cheeks,
That were in all Aurora's blush? Now thus,
Thus hollowed, creased, and marred with sin? Come in!
We'll lock the door; nor claim this mottled clay!
She is no more our child, our darling girl!

MOTHER.

There, husband, we have shut and locked the door.—
Oh, death with all its rankling sorrows, would
Be peace to this worn wasted form, that once
So like an angel shed perfumes.—

Is't come to this! Must we in our old age
Deny a rescue to the wreck we've caused
In part, through our neglect to clear away
The hidden rocks? We must not thus so do.
Is not the Lord more merciful than we?
We neither one are fit to throw a stone.

FATHER.

Have we not done the very best we knew?

MOTHER.

The best we knew; but not the best we should
Have known.

FATHER.

It's hard to cast her off thus, now,
When she's come back, a wounded bleeding lamb,
Beside the sheep-fold, but to die with those
She loves.—I cannot help to wound her worse.—
But shall we bring her in and nurse her now?

MOTHER.

She is our flesh and blood, let's bring her in;
The sun has parched too long her wasted form,
And fevered brow.

FATHER.

Let's bring her in:—God knows,
And God alone, the agony of this
Hard hour, of our life's disappointed hopes.—
The door is open: look you on these rags,
These features so defaced.—But see, she wakes:
Oh why does she not sleep,

MARY.

Is this again
A drunken fever of debauchery?
It cannot be. The stanch of belching hell?
Hell never paints the likeness of this sight.—
Are these the only tattered remnants left?
These feebled parents? these who reared my life
In luxury in laps of ease? And this
The porch, in years agone that was my world?
Would it had ever been, and still could be

FATHER.

See how she brightens up.

MOTHER.

The old look comes
Again. She is our own, our darling girl.

MARY.

Undone am I! Alas! why have I thus
Subverted life, deserted friends and home!—
Speak, mother, father, can you ever take
This wasted, hell-wrecked form within your door?—
I know I should not ask it.

MOTHER.

Yes, daughter,
This has been our constant prayer through all the years;
To see your angel face at home again,
Again before we slept in death,

MARY.

Is this
The sound of mortal voice that now I hear?
Oh, no, it cannot be; this is too sweet.
I have not heard its like in all the years,
The slavish years of sin. How can I look
You in the face, I but deserve your scorn.

MOTHER.

Come, father, let's into the house with her.
This is of all the burdens in the world
Most precious in our hands. Be careful lest
We pain her that we love.

MARY.

Alack! alack!
You'll never see the answer to your prayers;
This face is mottled with the stains of sin!

FATHER.

Stop here within the kitchen. Bring them out,
Her clothes that in her bureau hang. Put on
The finest gown. Wash off the stain of years,—
And I'll into the other room and wait;
And only think that she is pure and fair,
Will think this but a mockery, a dream.

MARY (alone)

Has it come to this! It surely is not true.—
Down frightful devils from your slimy caves;
You cannot rob me this life's only bliss,

To live again my childhood o'er. I'll live
It e'en though hell quakes to its farthermost limits.

FATHER (alone in parlor)

It's all as 'twas the day she left us here
To weep, and wait her longed-for coming home.
What will she say, when this again she sees,
This room we've never changed?—Yet we're all changed.—
Life's but a fraud, to think what might have been
Our joy and happiness through all these years.—
Life as it's lived, at best's but mockery;
A discord played upon a harp untuned,
Each string but catching up a tearful tone
Of some long-hoped-for joy that's crushed and gone.—
We move forever twixt two worn-out words,
Surprise and disappointment: these are life.
Yet God is love: He tries to spare our pains,
He teaches us to know and live the truth,
To put aside the things that rob our lives.
He cannot fathom why we are so blind
And deaf to all the past has ever taught,
As thus to rear and foster in our midst
A hellish and polluted den of snakes,
That pierces to our vitals every day,
That strikes the first, the fairest and the best,
That makes an earthen hell in which to live.—
Thou Inconceivable in Patience, Hope
And Love; how long canst even Thou endure

The strain we thus must put Thee to?—The end
Must somewhere come to this in human thought
That nurtures hell and wantonness.

MOTHER.

She comes!
This is the answer to our prayer of years:
Her face, transfigured now in youthful form
And childish beauty;—This is home again.—
Here, take this easy chair.

MARY.

Have I thus changed?

FATHER.

It saddens me! They say that e'er the spirit
Takes its flight, sweet angels hover near,
And kiss e'en fallen mortals back to youth
Again; retouch the image marred by age and sin,
That God may know the child, returning home.

MARY.

And this the room? It all is as it was!

FATHER.

Yes, we have kept it thus with careful hands
Throughout the longing years of pain, we've waited
Ever ready your return, in prayer.

MARY.

Has sin thus so deceived me with the thought
Of banishment, if I returned to you?—
But wait, I'd sing again the old old song,
We sang together many years ago.

" 'Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home!
Home, home, sweet, sweet, home!
Be it ever so humble,—
There's no place like home! "

There, that will do. Alas! the frosts of time
Have quite undone us both: all's discord now.
These stings that once were fanned by melody,
Are harsh,—this throat is hoarse with sinful life.

MOTHER.

No, daughter, this was heavenly concord quite.
This old piano's waited long your touch;
For it has never sounded since you left.

MARY.

Nor has this soul struck on its finer chords,
Since fate has handed it unto the ways
Of sin; since I have left you here alone
And followed up my fiery appetites.
But all this mocks me!—Down, ye hellish dreams!—
Is that my picture on the wall?

MOTHER.

Yes, you,
It is the only thing we've added since
You left. We could not have you here, and so
We've had you there. It's ever been the angel of our home.

MARY.

Ah, it is long since I
Have looked like that.—I fear,—down hellish forms!—
You think I'll ever look like that again?

FATHER.

Yes, sweeter far than that; for there's in store
An heritage eternal, to ascend
The yawning abyss formed by sin's deceit.

MARY.

I know not; for I see strange fiery beasts,
And hellish forms, where'er I look. I fear,
I fear that this upon the wall is more
Than I can ever hope to be again.
My mind is blunted, and my soul is sick;
My feet are shackled; broken are my wings:—
Oh could I fly as once I flew, I'd fly—

FATHER.

But those that cannot fly must walk, and those
That cannot walk must crawl.

MARY.

How can I walk?
I cannot even crawl,—I dare not look
At God's most awful face, for fear He'll strike
Me dumb for such blasphemy.

MOTHER.

Do you not know
The story of the maid, in Holy Writ,

That men, in righteous wrath, would loathe have
stoned
But when the Savior heard, He sweetly said,
Let him that has not sinned, throw first his stone;
And then, when they were gone, He said to her,
Go too, in peace, and sin no more.

MARY.

A ray
Of hope, above my awful writhing sea of sin.—
That maid am I! Those self-same words I heard
This morn,—I had forgotten them till now.
That's how it comes I'm here. O, had I heard
Them many years ago. 'Tis hard for me,
Thus steeped in sin, to hear. The awful din
Of writhing spirits almost drives me wild.—
Down, down! ye hellish beasts! I dimly see
You vanquished. Yet you rise again to fight.—
Would there were mission ladies everywhere!
Would I could live again my life. I'd go
E'en to the darkest holes of hell, and draw
From out their sickening depths, lost angels,
Such as I have ever been.—But I am now
Aweary; will you lay me down to rest,
And turn the couch so I can see the face
I wore when I was but a peaceful child.—
There, that will do.—My head feels cooler now.—
Would I had not defaced the image there
Upon the wall.—

MOTHER.

Who comes?

JOHN (in semblance, an old umbrella mender.)

I heard a voice;
The voice of all the stringed melodies
Most musical.

FATHER.

Stand back, you villain monster!
Speak what you are that dares thus come to rob
Us of the only hour we've had in years.

JOHN.

I come to speak to her that was my wife.

FATHER.

Stand back, you heartless villain!

MARY.

Cease, father, thus.—
Are those the hazel eyes that once looked out
Beneath a careless curl in mirth?

JOHN.

Ah, so!
Those days,—alas, they're gone! those heavenly days!
Who then would dare have prophesied me thus,
In semblance, an umbrella mender bowed
With grief?

FATHER.

Wife, here, did prophesy far worse;
The worst that's been; when years agone, you were
The hellish infant of your father's home,
Get out! you scurvy villain, devilish thief,

That robbed this household of its costliest pearl!—
Get out! before I strike!

MARY.

Cease, father, thus.—
You rob me of the only joy that's left.
You shock my dizzy brain. It was not he,
That thus you now behold, who robbed your hearth,—
It was not he that left the old home cold
And cheerless. No, not he! He was my lover.
We two were born but for each other's joy.
As giant timbers, brought from distant hills,
Are mated for the ship, so we were made
Each other's counterpart in heaven. Ah, say
It not. It was not he that robbed our home.—
'Twas licensed whisky! poison run! not he.
But why this waiting? I must know, e'en now,
Your years, since long ago we parted fair
To meet thus foul.

JOHN.

The story's hard to tell.
I wish you had not asked it; I had rather
Trace the devil now through hell, than this
Sad sickening story of my years of pain.
But I will tell it through, and make it short.
Yet, I had rather you should never know
This wretched misery.—You know I killed
A villain—

FATHER.

Get you out! no murderer—

MARY.

Cease, father!

JOHN.

Who had drugged me for my money?
This was the only glass I ever thought
I'd drink.—The last and only glass I've drunk.—
You know I told you when I saw you last,
That he had pledged to help me get a job;
It was a friendly glass; 'twas drunk for you;
Drunk to secure his closer friendship,
And through that the work; to keep our treasure
Till the coming time when we'd return again
To this old town, as soon as we believed
Our parents' anger would admit.— That glass,
Deceitful "only glass"! see what it's wrought!—
You heard?

MARY.

Heard this? Why, no! Oh horrors!
But on! be quick!

JOHN.

You had not heard it?
Then I wish I had it safe away behind
My closed lips again. But it is told.—
The villain's brother, then, a bribed police,
Accomplice to the bloody crime begun,—
It makes me crave his blood to think of him!—
Took me in haste to trial, and in his greed,
Divided with the court my every cent:—
Thus, I was sentenced to imprisonment

For life. I had no friend but you. They said
You'd heard, had cursed the day you'd looked
on me,
Had flown in safety home.

MARY.

Oh horrors!
Would that I had only heard!

JOHN.

We had not been
A week within the city, as you know.—
The rest's surmised. 'Tis toil and toil and toil
Through years of dull monotony. These hands
Behold these callused hands, if this you doubt,
And this the muscle of my sinewy arm:
They are the only testimony, now,
To this, the truth.—Years came and went in sick-
ening
Silence. I would have died, but for the thought
Of you, and of my angel mother.

MARY.

O worthy husband, this but proves the trust
I placed in you long years ago!—But on.

JOHN.

At last, when long and weary years had robbed
The flush and glow of youth; when toil had bowed
This rugged back, had shatered all these nerves,
Had crushed this hopeful will;—then came my
time,
The one day of my life. A fire broke out

Within the prison, near my place of toil;
I worked with giant strength and fought it down;
See, here, the scars upon my face and hands.
And then, at length, the longed-for pardon came—
But e'er it came, 'twas just a year today,—
I felt, somehow, that mother died. A silent
Message told the very hour. When freed
A month ago, I hastened home again,
And trudged up yonder hill to drop a tear
And lay a bunch of flowers, upon her grave.
This done, I hastened here and hid myself
Where years agone, I waited you so oft,
I lay concealed a day and night to catch
A glimpse of you. I rose amazed at last
At what I heard; for in that morning prayer,
I heard this aged mother raise her voice
In hopeful pleading, asking she might live
Until her long-lost angel girl should come
Again safe home to her. The first desire
Of all my life was now to bring you home.
I hastened to the city that same day,
And scarce, since then, have slept three hours a night.

I searched the city, scanning every face
In all the throbbing crowds. I stood at morn
And noon and night upon the street and watched,—

Each day a different street; accoutered thus,
And making low wierd tones to catch each eye,
Until I'd searched each street. At last, by chance,

I happened past a mission of the slums.
I asked if they had seen or heard of you.
They told me but an hour before, they'd sent
You home.—I could not wait; I felt anew
The pulse of youth through all my being start.
I hastened to the depot, breathless paced
The floor,—I could not wait,—the hour seemed
years.
The train drove slowly, till at last I'm come
As thus I stand.

MARY.

Oh horrors! is't come to this!
Most noble husband, has it come to this!
Would I could tell my story: but I see
More hellishness displayed, than can be told:
We simple village folk were food for sharks,
For gambling sharks, for men of shameful sin!
I see it all! They told me you had fled,
Had cruelly deserted me for drink.
I never half believed it; never! though,
They took me in as loving friends, they said;
Gave me protection in a time of need:
Then took advantage of my broken heart.
I was so pure that all my world was flowers;
I knew not such a word as villain then.
They must have drugged my food: I'm certain now
They did; for I oft since have seen it done:
I was not half myself through hellish dreams.
They gave me liquor by degrees, to drown
My pain. Bad led to worse, till I became

A fallen woman. Then they mocked me
By the nickname, "Fallen Angel." Beauty did
It all. 'Twas all the same black villain's scheme.

JOHN.

Yes, it is even so!

FATHER and MOTHER.

Can this be true?

MARY.

Hedged in by hell and shame, I lived long years
In deepest sin; nor dared return again
To this, my home. At last, my beauty gone,
A burned out crater, I was driven forth,
Too black for e'en the blackest hell to hide.
Thus driven forth, half drunk and poorly clothed
I wandered here and there, without an aim,
Without a hope or care,—a mummied devil.
'Twas early Sunday morning, e'en this morning.
The church bells pealed their lofty chimes; but not
For such as I. Had I but even tried
An entrance anywhere, they would have belched
Me forth in holy horror.—So I walked,
Or loitered rather, every door in all
The city barred against my frightful form;
No one in all the crowds to whom I dared
But speak. I know not how it came, I chanced
To loiter past a Mission, when I caught
A strain of music, an old song I'd sung
When but a child upon my mother's knee.
I know not how I came to see again

The old home and be in my happy teens;
But e'er I knew, I stood within the door.
And then the music ceased, and I again
Was what you see. But e'er I could retreat,
A mission lady held me by the arm
And had my story, asked about my home;
Then told me o'er the Bible story, mother,
You retold a little while ago.
She begged me let her send me home; and so
My story ends, thus blotted, marred and stained.
I'm dying now: yet there's an awful debt;
And ours is not the only one. There are
Vast thousands thus ensnared. I see, alas!
A wail arise, so black it hides the sun.
Oh that the world might read again the tale
Of Cain and Abel, till its heart was thawed;
Oh that it might but read in us, the fallen,
The lesson that it is so slow to learn,
The lesson of protecting sympathy.

JOHN.

Yes, there is someone, sometime, somewhere, has
A debt that must be met. I curse e'en
To my latest breath, the government that dares
Both sell a man a glass that steals his brains
Away, and then turns round, and for the deed
Done when thus frenzied, that can never be
Undone again; dares sentence him for life:
I curse it to my very latest breath!
And am no anarch when I dare now say,
That this which robbed me of my wife and home,

My freedom and my time, which winked at justice
Honesty and right, is licensed greed;
And needs a cleansing to its inmost depths.

MARY.

And this in government that made me thus
That now you see, against existing law,
Is rotten to the core!

MARY.

And this that makes
A hell for man, will fall as sure as Lucifer
Did fall from heaven or I from right;
Unless it banishes existing wrongs.
No government can play the double faced
And bloody villain, though to pay its debts;
And live. There'll be a reckoning time with God!
Oh that I might but live to see the day
When this that made my life a hell, is gone;
When each man knows and does his little part
In lifting those that are debased and wrecked;
When selfishness has had its restless day;
When love of God and man, rules all the world!

MARY.

Oh that the world might read again the tale
Of Cain and Abel, till its heart did thaw:
Oh that it might but read in us the fallen,
The lesson that must some day e'en be learned;
The lesson of protecting sympathy.—
I'm dying now, so 'tis no time to talk
Of what must come as sure as God is God,

I must prepare the future. Husband, out
A little while. I have a dying wish
That sears my very soul as coals of fire.
You shall come back to see me die. I'll have
Them call you. Think till then upon your future.—
He is gone!—Oh that we both were young again!—
But, father, mother, hear me in my last
Most earnest wish. When I was young, I could
Have had what'er I asked; but foolish then,
I did not ask the things I should.

MOTHER.

You are
Our darling angel yet: ask what you will,
We'll grant it.

MARY.

Oh did I hear aright?
Then death is boundless joy!—I hesitate,
I'm now almost afraid to speak my last
Desire. I know you'll think it very hard
To grant.

PARENTS.

As parents we will hear.

MARY.

And grant?

PARENTS.

And grant!

MARY.

Then if 'tis granted, life will not
In all be wasted. Hear me now. How much
In money, house and land, have we?

FATHER.

About
Ten thousand, daughter, why?

MARY.

Oh is't so much!
I only wish 'twas twenty.

FATHER.

You can't ask
We give it him out there?

MARY.

No, father far
From that.—But had I lived till you were dead,
And been obedient to you; then I
Had been the only heir: you grant it so?

FATHER.

You, daughter, are the only heir

MARY.

Then 'tis well.
I ask you now, and God, Himself, I know,
Has prompted this my dying wish: I ask
You give your all, in money house and land,
To build a Mission in the city slums,
Next where I dogged my life away. 'Twill help
To raise, in time, so many straying girls,
And work a world of good. I'd have it named,
The "Fallen Angel." Not in pride; but that
The section of the city may recall
In it my wasted life, and thus be led

To sympathy of it, through me. I'd like
You see it builded e'er you die; and have
E'en John to help you.

FATHER.

'Tis difficult, this wish!
God knows, that all one's property is hard
To give.—How is it, wife?

MOTHER.

Your will and God's
Be done!

FATHER.

Yes, daughter, your last dying wish
Is granted, and at length shall be fulfilled.

MARY.

Then God be blessed; for in this dying hour,
I now can look Him in the face, and say;
My life, while 'twas a sacrifice upon
The Nation's altar, for the Nation's sin,
Has not been lived in vain. I see adown
The future years, that growing good shall come.
I would that I had many lives to thus
So give in death!—Now call my husband in.—
Your future?

JOHN.

I do not know, I cannot tell.
I am an outcast, hated everywhere.
The only friends I ever had in life
Are now both gone, with this your coming death.
The thought of murder is upon my soul,

And every one is gainst me. Oh that I, too,
Might die with you. But God seems pleased to have
Me live to drink the bitterest dregs;—enough
For both our lives; for I was most to blame
In all this pain. I am the rankest weed
That e'er has grown upon this sin-cursed earth.
The callus on my soul is e'en as thick
As 'tis upon a turtle's back.

FATHER.

'Tis not
So bad; we have it planned for you, e'en now.

JOHN.

Be quick and tell it; for I'm willing
To do anything, live anywhere, you say;
E'en back in prison, if you'll have it so.

FATHER.

You are to live with us; to take her place
Within our home. Together, we will live,
And spend our years in working out her wish,
Our all, our every dollar, goes to build
A Mission Chapel in the city, where
Perchance, some wasting life may be reclaimed.

JOHN.

Oh this is kindness, magnified a thousand
Times. How can I ever half repay it:
These hands are all that I can call my own.

MARY.

But I must go. The call has come. And as
I slowly go, get down again the Book,
The Book you gave me years ago. Give't John
To be his daily friend and guide. Now ope
It where a golden curl lays pressed. It's mine,
And grew when I was young and fair to see.
That Psalm was once most favored of them all.
I read it last the night I ran away:
See, there, the tear-stains that were made that hour.—
You have the place, now read.

JOHN.

Wait yet a little while.
I want to pledge you I will meet you there
In death. I pledge it now, as by this Book
I swear my life, my all, my every deed
And thought.

FATHER.

Yet wait! the roses, snowy-white.

JOHN.

That land will be all joy.—But think! the debt,
The debt of our lost lives must yet be paid
By someone, sometime, somewhere.

FATHER.

Daughter, here
Upon your breast, these roses snowy-white;
They are my pledge that we will keep our vow.
They're plucked with longing heart, that's crushed with pain,

With heart that waits and prays through coming years,
The curse may be removed; that gives its all
In house and land to help displace the sin!

MARY.

Thanks, now I die in peace.—And John, make this
The solace of your future years.—Now read.

JOHN.

The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul:
He guideth me in the paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For thou art with me:
Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me
In the presence of mine enemies:
Thou hast anointed my head with oil;
My cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

FATHER.

Our " Fallen Angel " is asleep, is safe!
Let's down upon our knees, before our God,
And ask His blessing on our future task.

Who will pay this debt,
That now is over due?
This pain, this misery, this suffering?
My brother, it rests with you
To crown each thorn with a rose,
That stands in your brother's way;
To strike off the shackles of sin,
That keep him in slavery each day:
My brothers, it rests with you,
Who are strong, to heed the call,
To give protecting sympathy
To those who are want to fall.—
God help us to stand for the right;
To fight for the brave and the true;
To pay this mortgage now,
That long is over due!

The End.

AUTUMN.

Behold the rainbow-tinted Autumn Queen,
As on the east wind she is seen;
Gliding as noiseless as a silken thistle-down;
Enrobed in dreamy, hazy, fluffy gown;
Kissed by the gentle cool refreshing breeze;
Smiling into her likeness all the million trees;
With horn of plenty, opened wide,
Scattering angelic symphonies on every side.

She glides adown the waking plain,
And cheers the ruddy toiling swain;
She lingers in the spacious field
And lavishes a plenteous yield;
She gathers up the whole year's sweet
And showers it at the orchard's feet.—

Behold her, rainbow-tinted Autumn Queen,
As on the east wind she is seen;
Gliding as noiseless as a silken thistle-down;
Enrobed in dreamy, hazy, fluffy gown;
Kissed by the gentle cool refreshing breeze;
Smiling into her likeness all the million trees;
With horn of plenty, opened wide,
Scattering angelic symphonies on every side.

THE OLD AND NEW.

'Tis gone;
The hand of Father Time has cut it off;
The Old Year is no more.
'Tis gone;
Its sunshine and its showers,
Its checkered thorns and flowers,
Its good deeds and its bad,
Its joyous and its sad,
Are gone;
They're gathered in,
They are no more.
Bound is the sheaf,
Turned is the leaf;
'Tis gone.

'Tis come,
With outstretched arms of hope,
The stainless fair New Year.
'Tis come,
In purest white it's decked,
With diamonds richly flecked,
Its soul contains good deeds,
Its hand strews heaven-born seeds.
'Tis come
With purer thoughts
And nobler deeds;
Clean is the leaf,
Unbound is the sheaf;
'Tis come.

THE CHANGE.

While you were here
The world o'erflowed with June:—
The roses caught the fragrance of your breath,
And mirrored back your smile of blushing health;
The birds were all atune,
And warbled ever morning, night and noon
To counterfeit the free, wild, airy lay,
You caroled in your blissful, buoyant way;
The sun was all aglow in cheery wealth,
As radiant as your face beneath the moon;
For everything shared in your perfect boon
While earth outpoured its rarest June,
And you were here.

Since you are gone
I sit inside the door,
And close the screen, and mutely muse alone:—
The fragrance of the roses, too, has flown,
They blush for me no more:
The lonely robin plaintive, o'er and o'er
Now sighs that you are gone,
And wakes me at the cold gray morning's dawn:
A cloud across the sun has blown:
And memory slowly ponders evermore
The silent power and friendship that you bore:
And so I sit inside the door
Since you are gone.

THE DANDELION LESSON.

O dewy dandelion,
You, rarest radiance of sifted sunny beams,
You, smile of gladness, birth of Klondike dreams,
You, first to wake to early spring-time's faintest call,
You, constant busy winner over all,
You, dripping with the rosy morning's diamond dew,—
Are but a weed to all except a few.
And though but few smile on your earnest up-turned face,
You are impelled to fight your hardy race,
To strive and force your own sure steady way,
To push aside whate'er you meet each day;
And though you're crushed by enemies till nearly dead,
You bind your wounds and raise your bruised head
In triumph, ever pressing hard your forward tread.

O heaving heart,
You, ruler of earth's vast and strange variety,
You, harp atune for all eternity,
You, soul of all the broad unbounded Universe,
You, triumph of the cycles from your birth,
You, even you, are commonplace to all but few.
You toil and ache and quiver through and through,
And yet scarce half a score will note your humble lot,

While all the throbbing millions heed you not.
You well may copy from the sturdy dandelion:—
No time to waste, no time to fret and pine,
No time to nurse the trivial pains and pleasures of the hour;
For work must measure all your worth and power:
No room save for the brightest sunshine of the sphere;
For dark discouragement has here no place, nor fear.
And though you're crushed to earth while others onward cope,
Arise impelled, if but to blindly grope;
And work, though bleeding, till you've launched your highest hope.

MY SONG.

Could I but sing as angels sing,
Songs that could ne'er grow old;
Could I but sing like Israfel,
With radiant harp of purest gold,
With silver strings fanned into song
By gentle moonlight zephyr wands;
With voice as when a mountain stream
Goes rippling over diamond sands,
Without a minor measure heard,
A symphony of tender tone,
In all a dream of paradise,
On bed of lilies newly blown;—
Could I but sing as Israfel
Doth sing, I'd sing for you;
My song would glitter with my love,
As shines the sun lit dew:
And every word would e'en be true,
And I would sing it all for you,—
Could I but sing as Israfel.

WE SAID GOOD-BYE.

We said good-bye;
The time had come that we must part.
We said good-bye,
My very being hung upon your eye
And caught the billowy beating of your heart.
We said good bye,
And everything took wing,—
The fragrance of the flowers,
The glory of the priceless summer hours,
The merry murmur of the busy bees,
The carol of the birds among the trees.
We said good-bye;
The sunshine and the love of all I knew,
Of all you brought and shared was gone with you.
We said good-bye,
And I was lost, a million weary miles from home,
Upon an unknown journey
All alone.

THE FUTURE.

Could I have stood in childhood's morn
Where I stand today,
Have known as I know today,
I would have leveled the stony road
I've wended o'er with a borrowed load;
I would have left my mistakes undone,
Accomplished more than I've scarce begun,—
Could I have stood where I stand today.

Could I but fly to the mountain height
Of my highest hope,
A moment live that hope,
I'd scan the valleys and paths and steeps
Below me strewn in their Sphinx-like heaps;
Supreme I'd stand with a ripened sight;
With broad perspective adjusted aright,
I'd keenly mark all the long hard road;
Then hastening down to my old abode,
I'd crowd each moment that passed me by
As I labored on with a knowing eye,—
Could I but fly to the mountain height.

But all I have is this point of time
That traces daily the lengthening line
Of memory, jagged and indistinct,

Half blurred and broken and loosely linked.
I cannot even but know or see
Where the morrow's sun will go down for me.
But faith is anxious to be my guide,
And hope is spurring on either side,
And love in gentleness goes before
And leads in earnestness evermore;
With these, I cannot mistake the way,
I cannot fall or blindly stray.
But whether it be o'er the mountain height
Of fame and glory or power and might,
Or down the valley unwept unsung,
'Twill be the same when the journey's done.
For when the twilight at last has come,
The sun has set and the day is done,
And evening shadows have flooded the sky,
And crowded memories have floated by,
When this little bubble of life has burst,
The spirit flown, the body dispersed;
If only then I've been true each day
To the visions given to guide life's way,
If only then I've but each day served
The end for which I was wrought and nerved,
Be it great or small, be it high or low,
Be the journey long roundabout or slow,
'Twill be my best. So I'll trusting go,
And crowd each moment that passes by
As I labor on 'neath God's knowing eye.

THE PLOWMAN.

The light of ages beaming from his earnest eye,
With freedom's last and fullest breath upon his face,
And all the cumulative force of centuries
Within his soul,—He follows in the furrow
Of his plow, with optimistic trust in God and right,
With manly independence of the sovereign soil.

He trods forever down benighted ignorance;
His freedom marks the everlasting wreck of Kings.
The wisdom of the sages all is at his feet;
The commerce of the world obeys his just command.
He is the one most favored creature known of God,
Within the farthest circle of the Universe,
E'en to the loftiest diamond of the vaulted sky.

Whence came this sinewy strength, this firm and buoyant step?
This high and cultured forehead and this busy brain?
What tuned these senses to the sifted symphonies
Of time's divinest melodies in light and sound?
What sculptured this, his Hereculean symmetry?
What chiseled in his face this forceful character?

This sturdy look? this simple downright excellence?
Whence came this ever willing hand and honest heart?
This unalloyed content, the highest dream of Kings?—
The hand of freedom and the god of honest toil,
The education and religion of his hearth;
These, through the years, have shaped him to the man he is.

The hand of freedom and the god of honest toil,
The education and religion of his hearth;
With these,—what? cares he for rebellions or for wars?
His heart is ever with his earnest loving wife;
His joy is with his children and his many friends;
His prayer is for unending peace and righteous law.
He is the truest fountain source of government;
The handiwork of God's most finished depth of thought;
The prophecy of visions now but faintly dreamed;
The optimistic type of all the teeming earth;—
This man that follows in the furrow of his plow.

THE OLD APPLE TREE.

I

My dear child, do you know that the old apple tree
Has a story for you and a story for me?

When the zephyrs of spring lisp a call soft and deep,
And awake all the buds from their cold wintry sleep,
And call all the bees from their long silent hive,
To cheer every blossom that now is alive;
Each lone little flower of the million or more
To itself keeps a singing each hour o'er and o'er:
"Just wait till the autumn; my cheek plump with joy,
I'll be a large apple for some happy boy."
But along with the sunshine, a blight finds its way,
That sends many blossoms to death and decay;
Which touches the heart of the breeze as it glides,
Till it drops in each chalice the tear that it hides.
But the tear of the breeze cannot cure what is done,
And soon the dead blossoms their short race have run.
And so swift the thief works and so much does it do,
That at length, when the days of the summer are through,
And autumn comes tinging the old tree with pride

And mellowing and sweetening the apples inside,
And calling the children, who wild in their glee,
Pour out their loud laughter with hearts light and free;
From all of the million sweet blossoms or more,
There are only an hundred ripe apples in store.

II

Now this is the story the old apple tree
Is a telling for you and a telling for me:

In the spring-time of life, there's a million glad boys,
And a million sweet girls running over with joys.
And the woods and the hills and the meadow-lands too,
All mingle their beauty, the children to woo.
And out cross the meadow and over the hill,
The children dance lightly and blithe as the rill.
But when at the even the sun sinks so low,
When the wind in sweet reverence stands hushed neath the glow,
And the splendor of loveliness softens the sheen,
And the curtains of evening portray the Unseen,
And the choirs of Nature with hearts all atune
Pour forth their sweet anthems; then soon, ah so soon,
The children all home to their mothers must fly:
And as through the twilight the night draweth nigh,

Each child by a mother's affection and love,
Is tucked snug in bed; while the angels above,
On the woof of the moonbeams, throughout the long night,
Keep weaving sweet dreams in their soft rhythmic flight.
And throughout their long wanderings, till late in the night,
Each boy and each girl thinks and dreams in delight:
"I'll be a good man, that the children all love.";
"I'll be a sweet woman, a blessing to prove."
But sickness by night steals a darling away;
And as the morn frets all the darkness with gray,
A coffin is placed at the trundle-bed's side,
And a mother is weeping, her loved one has died.
Yes, the silence of death slowly flutters and falls;
And e'en the lone robin in sadness now calls,
As perched by his nest through the long silent hours
He sighs for the child mong the waiting wild flowers.
Ah, well may the trees bow their heads, though so tall,
And well may the hills still reecho the call;
They will never more hear the sweet joyous foot-fall.
But what of the sadness that now with the years
All the woods and the hills and the meadowland fills.

The woods, clothed in emerald, sapphire and gold,
Waits the gay merry prattle that joy once made bold;
And the hills lift their heads, and in silent surprise,
List long for the cheer of the children's wild cries;
And the meadowland, too, with its carpet of lace,
Feels no more the blithe footfall of childhood's wild race:
For the children have wandered from Nature and God,
To the tinklings and babblings and wiles of the sod.
And now through the nightime, the vampire of greed,
Unheard and unnoticed, works on in all speed,
Allures the young dreamers to fanciful joys,
And steals their best life-blood for pride's clumsy toys.
And when the hills hear it, they echo the sigh
That is borne from the leaves as they shudder, good-bye;
For winter to ease them of sadness and pain,
Softly covers them over on hillside and plain;
For sadder than death, yes, the saddest of earth,
Is the life that exists, dead to all life's true worth.
And sin, the sly thief, works so hard night and day,
That he leads the sweet children far, far, far, astray;
Till at length, down the years, when time steps softly forth,

And ripens the children to life's perfect growth,
From all of the million sweet children,—ah, then,
There are only an hundred sweet women and men.

III

My dear child, do you know that the old apple tree
Almost sobbed as it told this sad story to me.
But it added with hope, when the story was done,
That each boy and girl; yes, all, every one,
Can be a good man, scattering sunshine and love,
Or else a sweet woman, rich blessings to prove;
If only each day you'll be thoughtful and kind,
And obey God's great laws in soul body, and mind.

DEATH.

Death is the only certain fact of life:
We cannot tell what else may come to us,
But this we know. And though invisible,
It stands across our dark uncertain path,
A giant bold, with huge uplifted hand.
It stands,—and we as helpless driven lambs
Go forth to meet it, never knowing when or where,
How very near or far away we are,
Until it strikes us down.
And yet we prate
And mock at this that drives us forth,
Much as a scarce half-witted boy makes battle
With his pewter sword, against his fancies.
We even try to fly our petty kites
By counter currents in its awful face.
Were't not that God is Patience, Hope, and Love,
Annihilation would be just and right.
We live in childish apotheosis of toys:
And yet at last, a yard-stick's two short lengths
Quite vanquish these; for in that hour, where are
Our lands and houses, honor, wealth, or fame?
We leave them as a boy his outgrown playthings,
For the larger and more real things of life,
And nevermore return to them again.

Death is not monstrous or unnatural.
It is of all events the most to be
Expected, most harmonious of all

We know in life; unless it be our birth,
And even this is swollowed up in death:
The purest lily blooms upon a thousand graves.
Why it is then we hover o'er our dead,
And smite our hearts with anguish and with pain?
Is it so sad, this parting, since the time
Is but a minute 'gainst eternities
Of reunited love and joy beyond?
We' d be all cheerfulness, were he to leave
For high preferment anywhere on earth.
And why these flowers? the time for flowers is past;
Earth now is o'er, with all its needs and pains
And struggling weaknesses for higher joy.
He heeds our lavish praises nevermore;
The opportunity is gone to cheer
Him thus, with honeyed words and earnest
smiles.—

But evermore the giant fearless stands,
And strikes now right now left. For all we know,
The next stroke may be ours. But if it is,
'Twill fall in love and mercy,—let it fall
Whene'er it will. But hush, be still, it speaks!
From out the dreaded silence of the tomb:—
Fear not: for fear is ignorance and sin:
Love's bold and joyous, ever looks ahead,
Nor frets the coming changes, though unseen.
Live each day nobly as if 'twere your last:
And gather but the incorruptible;
For yours is an eternal heritage.

A WALK WITH NATURE.

When the winter hies him northward,
And the spring-time, blithe and gay,
Pelts with sunshine, showers, and gladness,
Warmth and welcome, all the day;
When the world awakes in beauty,
Throws aside its coat of mail,
For the dreamy verdure vestment,
That unfurls from hill and dale;—
Then put off your cares and study,
Put aside the crowded throng,
For the cheer and smile of goodness,
For the sunshine and the song,
Take a walk with Mother Nature,
She will help you to be strong.

Let her guide you through the meadow,
That in beckoning gladness waves,
With its million young blades bending
O'er a million stubble graves.
"Look," she says, "my book is open:
Nothing stands, for all is change,
Either growing or receding;

It is true, e'en though it's strange.
Thus is life,—a constant growing
Towards the noble or the base,
Towards a life of endless blessing
Or a death in sad disgrace:
So take in the heaven-born sunshine,
Grow to fill some honest place."

Let her lead you through the woodland;
View the monarchs here and there,
Standing tip-toe, stretching upward,
Ever upward everywhere;
See them as with utmost vigor
Each one lifts its top limbs high
To the sunshine warm and plenteous,
Leaving all beneath to die.
"See," she says, "my book is open:
Life if ever thus held high
To the warming ways of goodness,
To the sunshine of the sky,
All the lower things must perish,—
Love alone can live so high."

And before your walk is ended,
Stop an hour among the flowers;
They, the fairy angel faces,
Sent by God to gladden ours.
"Why so wonder at their beauty?
They each moment view the skies,
Ever taking on its beauty,

Ever painting from its dies.
Why so wonder at their beauty?
It's a growth from hour to hour,
It's reflected from the beauty
Of of the God who made the flower:
Oh, look up, my child," says Nature,
"Open faced to God each hour."

TRUE GREATNESS.

I

Aflood with wonder,
Hid in tears and mingled smiles,
And gilded o'er with hopeful prayers,
Veiled in the radiant halo of a dream
That trails the rainbow of a passing storm,
The future stands supreme.
No one may touch it in its airy form;
For ever beckoning, it stands aloof,
And sphinx-like, is forever dumb.

II .

The common life makes scarce as great a change
Upon the world as does a flake of snow
That falls upon the bosom of the deep;
'Tis scarce more seen than is a drifting
Grain of sand upon the wasting desert:—
You would be different; would wield great power;

Would cast your impress on the changing world
And mold its destiny.—Oh what a dream,
Wild and extravagant with empty hopes!—
And yet, there slumbers somewhere in each breast
An instinct, beckoning it to God-like deeds,
That makes it fragment of the Infinite;
Conceal it how so ever much we will:
And, too, the world is ever challenging
With Herculean tasks, and lack of men:
'Tis God's most earnest wish for each of us
To stand upon some towering mountain peak,
Far from the sickening tread and blinding tumult
Waged for daily bread and selfish gain,
And with a vision splendid, that reaches
To the farthest depths of life's realities,
Catch up some noble purpose for our life;
And then locked-arms with faith and hope and love
Go ever forth to follow where He leads.

III.

You would be great? Then seek obscurity.
Ask not preferment. But know yourself, your God,
Your fellow men.—Gain safe retreat alone,
Beneath the eddies and the fitful ripples,
Within the quiet depths of thine own self;
And there apart in calm serenity,
In your best mood and with your clearest thought,
Gain mastery and sweet companionship
With thine own soul,—with all there is of worth

Within your being. Turn then about—
With open face and soul laid bare—to God,
Who mindful of the sparrow's slightest pain
And loving unto every creature,
Will gladly hear your earnest cry for aid:
And, as a father, order your uncertain
Plans; and through life's blind unceasing toil,
Direct your voyage, helping here and there
When fiercest blow the storms and highest beat
The breaking billows,—when of yourself
You are undone. This willing waiting calm
Companionship comes not with selfishness,
For God is love; so live in charity,
And go each day among your fellow men,
Serenely calm with His assuring aid,
And be the ever needed Good Samaritan.
Then when your life is rounded to its close;
When centuries have had their little day,
And disappeared; when the cold marble
On your long lost grave has toppled into dust;
When all that wealth and learning could enshrine
Has been corrupted by the rust and wear
Of time;—there will roll on in ceaseless joy,
Anonymous to those who know it best,
And never ending, every growing in its course,
Vibrations of eternal character,
Set up in men, and passed along with time
To generation after generation
As they come and go, an endless train.—
This then will be your unseen monument,

That you have builded lasting character;—
Enough to quench the most insatiate thirst
The culmulative greed of all the earth
Could frame did it but know life's grandest truths,
And measure time beside eternity.

GRANDMOTHER.
(A story of giving)

Out of the way in a dingy room,
Grandmother sat in her usual way,
Rocking and humming a bygone tune,
Thinking and dreaming, the livelong day,
Stopping her rocker now and then
To wipe a growing tear away.

Listless she sat to what was near;
For she heard the bygone voices again,
And she saw the faces of old once more,
And joined in their merry prattle and din:
She had raveled the stitches of seventy years
And had flung in time's face her bright smiles again,
But the strike of the clock on the cupboard bare
Told her that time had but laughed at her dream,
And brought her again to her dingy room,
And shaded her eye with a saddened gleam;
For "Nobody cares," she said, " for me,
Only an outcast at best I seem."

"Even my boys are to busy to come
And visit their mother now withered and gray;
Death would be sweetness and joy to me,
Life's but a lingering pain each day."
And thus on the minor chords of her heart,
She hummed in her usual downcast way.

Then she thought of Christmas with all its joys,
And this painted a real smile on her face;
And she thought of the presents it used to bring,
And this added its sweeter and gladder grace;
And she thought of the presents she used to give,
And her heart o'erflowed in her blushing face.

"Life's not so sad as I thought it had been,
I'm younger by years than an hour ago:"
She said, as she searched in her bureau drawer
In quest of some present for Bill and Joe.
And she found at last what she knew they'd like;
And her features, with gladness, were all aglow.

She was seated again in her rocker old,
With two faded worn mufflers across her knee.
"Now, this is for Bill and this other's for Joe;
Yes, the boys will be glad for these presents from me."
And thus on the major chords of her heart,
She hummed in the merriest oldfashioned glee.

And just as she struck on the highest strain,
A rap on the door brought her back again.
The room, though so bare, was transfigured and bright;
For the joy in her heart had now frescoed each stain.
And gladly she welcomed her little guest,
Her only grandchild, her little Ben.

"My mamma, she sent me to ask you to tea
When 't 's Christmas tomorrow and everything's joy.—
My pay, w'y, he says that when Santa Claus comes,
There's nothin' but maybe he'll bring for his boy.
And we phoned the old fellow last night, and he said,
He'll bring me just every nice kind of a toy."

" And pa says, you know, when you hear the bells ring,
And the stars blink their eyes so you can't see him go,
And the moon slips behind a dark place in the clouds
And shuts his eyes tight so that Santa, you know,
Will bring him nice things, like the rest of the boys:—
Then's the time he'll be comin', pa says,— an' it's so!"

"And pa bringed you with me, this warm muffaler, too,
The nearest like what once his papa did wear;
So's you'll have no excuse, but'll be just as warm
As you would here a rockin' in this old arm chair.—
Pa says joy's in givin' and sadness in not,
And that's why Old Santa's big smile's everywhere!"

The prattler was gone, and the Grandmother now
Shook out the three mufflers, one new and two old;
Her eye caught the glitter and freshness of youth,
Her features lit up with the radiance of gold.
"Joy lays in the sharing, though however small,
And sorrow in hoarding, though richness untold:"
She hummed the grand major chord of her heart,
As she lived o'er the truth time has ever retold.

Christmas eve came at last, and she lighted her lamp,
And sat in her bygone oldfashioned way,
Rocking and humming the sweetest of tunes,
Thus she sat in her joy till the breaking of day.
She heard but the anthems of heavenly song
As she drifted and drifted and drifted away.
A flickering gleam, and the lamp light had flown;
The hoarse gasping ceased, and her life winged its way:—
The angel's same breath changed both lights into day.

BAREFOOT JOYS.

When you peel your boots and socks
And go barefooted the first day
That the weather's warm and pleasant,
And your mother says you may;
When the wild flowers robe the blushing spring
In ecstasies most rare,
And the birds atune with melody
Spread gladness everywhere,
And the bees from out their busy hives
Kiss every opening flower;
When you have ten thousand day-dreams
Crowded in each passing hour;
And the rooster's makin' music,
And the turkey-gobbler, he
Is a struttin' like he's landlord
Of all things there'll ever be;—
W'y, just everything is airin' off
And warmin' in the sun,
And a grinnin' and a growin'
And enjoyin' all the fun,—
When you peel your boots and socks
And take your first barefooted run.

When you peel your boots and socks,
Oh, gee! what airy fun;
You throw away all earthly cares,
And run and run and run.

You are wilder than the birds are,
And you even sauce your dad
When he tells you to keep quiet,
You don't care if he is mad.
And your mother in the distance, too,
Calls till her throat is sore;
But she has to mind her errands herself,
Cause 't's not your day to chore;
For you are so wild and happy
You forget where you are at,
And you run and yell and tumble,
And near spoil your new straw hat.
W'y the magic winged slippers
Of the gods can't half compare
With your airy fairy feelings,
And the way you tread the air,
When you peel your boots and socks
And just go boundin' everywhere.

But this reverie of childhood
Has long flown and passed away,
With its barefoot joys and pleasures,
And its ever tireless play,
With the dreams and growing wonder
Of its wild glad sunny hours,
With its lack of borrowed sorrows,
And its path of crowded flowers.
It is gone and gone forever,
And its light and noiseless tread,
And liquid laugh, and wild wide ways,

Are cold and harsh instead.
But there is a deeper pleasure
And a wilder wider joy,
As much deeper wilder wider
As you're older than the boy;
Joy that lies uncomprehended
During childhood's roguish play,
Joy that years alone can measure,
Only yours at life's noon-day,
Pleasure nobler, richer, grander,
Than the first barefooted display.

Bare your head to truth and knowledge,
And life's deeper wisdom learn;
Bare your heart to love and kindness,
For the brightest sunshine yearn;
Bare your hand to deeds of mercy,
Strong and sturdy dare to do,
For some poorer weaker brother
What will cheer both him and you.
Then as through your mind a higher truth
Comes flashing every day,
As each new hour brings deeper love
And nobler deeds alway;
Then barefoot joys and pleasures all
Will vanish quite to naught,
And work and worth, will rise supreme,
Make real your best thought:
The boots of pride and selfishness,
Forever thrown aside;

Bathed in the sunshine of your God,
Unshackled, strong, and tried,
Bare-headed,-hearted,-handed,
Dare to live, whate'er betide!

WHEN THE OLD HOT SUN'S A SINKIN'.

When the old hot sun's a sinkin' towards the tree-tops far away,
An' it's been as hot as blixen ever since the break o' day,
An' you're hoein' in the cornfield, an' you've lis-ened, oh so long!
For the dear old bell to call you to your supper—restin' song!
All at once you think you hear it, but it's only in your ear,
An' you keep on steady hoein', cause your dad's a hoverin' near,
An' your back's a achin' awful, for you've hoed hard the whole day;
When the old hot sun's a sinkin' near the tree tops far away.

Purty soon, the old bell calls you with its jinglin' clear and loud:
Then your backache hap'ly leaves you quick as lightnin' leaves a cloud;

An' you scatter 'cross the cornfield towards the house at your full speed,
With your heart a swellin' over with the thought, "It's time for feed."
As you come up through the barn-yard, Towser meets you with a bark;
But you can't take time to pet him, 'cause you're hungry as a shark:
An' you set down to the table an' you eat your level best;
When the old hot sun's a sinkin' 'mongst the tree tops in the west.

Then you get up from your supper an' you saunter to your chores;
'Cause you hate to fill the wood-box, but that job's sure always yours.
An' you stop to play with Towser, an' to tease the ol' "tom cat,"
An' to kill a while at nothin', 'cause you know all boys like that.
'Bout that time you hear a shrill voice hollerin' from the kitchen door;
Then you feel that pesky backache creepin' up your spine once more:
But you've got to fill the wood-box an' it's fearful tiresome—say!
When the old hot sun's a sinkin' 'hind the tree tops far away.

'Then you fill the worter buckets in a sort o' drollin' way
An' you feed the muley red calf a big bucket full o' whey.—
Then you whistle for old Towser, 'cause your even-in' chores are done;
An' your backache quickly leaves you an' you have a lot o' fun.
After while your daddy tells you that it's time you're off to bed;
Then you rinse your feet off lightly, and after prayer is said.
Twixt the straw-tick and the kivers, your tired self you lay to rest,—
When the old hot sun's a sinkin' 'neath the tree tops in the west.

'Twas but a dream; for here am I, an old man livin' on a farm,
With low-bent back an' totterin' step an' pekid voice an' quiverin' arm.
Oh, how I wished 'twas true that I was once again a roguish boy,
And every day was summer, and no one was bout to spoil my joy;
I'd jerk my shoes and stockin's, and I'd cool my old tired brain,
As I strolled out 'cross the meader, and away down through the lane

To where the shade was coolest and the wild flowers bade me rest;
When the old hot sun was sinkin' towards the tree tops in the west.
But I'm not a boy, and so I guess it's better the way it is;
For my life though mixed with sorrow, gleans many sweets that boys all miss.
And I'm kind o' glad that I've been through with the cares of childhood days,
For my life each day grows sweeter as the more I use God's ways;
And the more of earth's forgotten, and the tenderer my spirit grows,
And I feel His breath upon me sweeter than ever, at life's close.
Oh, I don't know how to tell it; but life's sunset's joy to me,
While my sweet old life's a sinkin' into the West,—eternity.

AT PARTING.

Let's close the curtain down
And say good-bye;
And let the twilight shadows
Of forgetfulness
Close round the rainbow-fretted hopes
Of bygone days,
And blot each buoyant reverie
From out the memory.—
Let's close the curtain down
And say good-bye.

Let's close the curtain down
And say good-bye;
And let the lilied matron
Of the morn
Unveil the myriad pleasures
Of each passing hour,
And weave the deepest chords of life
Into the woof of joy.—
Let's close the curtain down
And say good-bye.

Let's close the curtain down
And say good-bye;
And breast the untried future
With a steadfast smile,
And catch the honeyed sweetness
Of the coming years
Within the open chalice
Of our lives.—
Let's close the curtain down
And say good-bye.

DEC 28 1993

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 015 799 859 6